



Indiana State Department of Health

Epidemiology Resource Center

Quick Facts

Central Line Associated Bloodstream Infection (CLABSI)

What is a central line associated bloodstream infection (CLABSI)?

A CLABSI is a type of infection of the blood that is associated with the use of a central line (central venous catheter). A central line is a tube inserted into a major vein in a patient's chest, neck, arm, or groin that is used to take blood or to give medications. Central lines are usually in place for a long period of time and are very common in healthcare facility intensive care units. Germs (bacteria) that are present on or in the central line can enter the bloodstream and cause a CLABSI.

What are the symptoms of CLABSIs?

CLABSIs can cause a wide range of symptoms. Patients may experience fever, chills, and soreness, swelling, redness, or drainage around the central line insertion site.

How can CLABSIs occur?

The germs that can cause a CLABSI can be spread in a number of ways. Healthcare workers and visitors can carry germs on their hands, so if they touch the central line without washing their hands or using gloves, they can spread germs. There are also germs that are naturally present on the surface of the skin that can enter the bloodstream when the central line is inserted.

Who is at risk for CLABSIs?

Anyone with a central line can be at risk for developing a CLABSI. The elderly and patients with weakened immune systems are particularly at risk.

How do I know if I have CLABSI?

CLABSI can present itself in a number of ways, and often times your healthcare provider will need to perform a blood test and culture to determine if you have an infection.

How can CLABSIs be treated?

Your healthcare provider will decide on the best course of treatment for your infection. The treatment may involve prescribing antibiotics and/or removing the central line.

How are CLABSIs prevented?

One of the best ways to prevent CLABSIs is with proper hand hygiene. Healthcare providers should always wash their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before touching any part of the central line. In addition, your healthcare provider should wear a mask, cap, gown, or gloves when inserting or accessing the central line.

In order to prevent germs from getting into the central line and into the body, the openings of the central line should be cleaned before insertion as well as any time it is accessed for blood draws or to give medications. The area of the skin where the central line is inserted should also be cleaned with an antiseptic. Any bandages or dressings that cover the central line should be changed if they become wet or dirty.

One other way to help prevent CLABSIs is by only using a central line when it is absolutely necessary and having it removed as soon as it is no longer needed. You can ask your healthcare provider if your central line is still necessary.

If you go home with the central line still in place, make sure your healthcare provider gives you full instructions on how to care for it. Do not let family or friends touch the central line, and make sure to always wash your hands when you are handling the central line.

All information presented is intended for public use. For more information about CLABSIs, please refer to:

<http://www.cdc.gov/hai/>
<http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/bsi/bsi.html>
<http://www.in.gov/isdh/24769.htm>

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